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ETHIOPIA

Camel Milk Value-Chain Development Project Launch

Opening Remarks

Mission Director Dennis Weller

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Jijiga, Ethiopia

It's wonderful to be back in Jijiga. My first visit here was a little more than two months ago but my return today is special because I am here on behalf of the U.S. Government as the USAID Mission Director to launch the Camel Milk Value-Chain Development Project. This new project will bring attention to and develop the vast potential of the overlooked and underserved camel sector.

The Horn of Africa has the largest camel population in the world and the Somali Region has an estimated population of more than two million herds. While traditionally, people kept camels for social purposes such as prestige and source of wealth, more and more households are gradually converting their camels to commercial purposes for milk and camel trade.

There is a robust camel milk trade in this region, which is expanding and becoming lucrative. It is estimated that Somalis trade more than 5,000 liters of milk within the Somali Region and to neighboring countries such as Somaliland and Djibouti on a daily basis.

As more and more people migrate to urban areas and cities expand, we anticipate a greater demand for milk leading to more commercial and vibrant camel milk trade.

The overall objective of the USAID Camel Milk Value-Chain Development Project is to expand the productivity and competitiveness of the camel milk value-chain sector resulting in increased incomes and enhanced nutritional status of people in two zones of Siti (Shinile) and Fafan

(Jijiga) of Somali Region benefitting more than 50,000 households.

The project will work at multiple related levels. Working with the Bureau of Livestock, Crop and Rural Development, and the Somali Pastoral and Agro-pastoral Research Institute, the project will introduce and expand camel husbandry techniques to improve camel productivity at the household level.

The project will support milk-marketing groups to improve milk hygiene and quality and link them with milk buyers and processors to receive better pay for their milk products. I understand that a new commercial milk processing plant is coming to Jijiga. Such business ventures will also provide new market opportunities and options for households selling their milk.

Through the expansion of the animal health service delivery system, animal feed production and the cold-chain transportation system, we anticipate increased jobs and expansion of services to benefit the greater population.

Pastoral areas of Ethiopia incur frequent droughts. However, camels are more resistant to drought and can produce milk for 6-12 months a year. They yield an average of four liters a day during the dry season and seven liters a day during the rainy season. Supporting camel milk value-chain development will make camel keeping a profitable business and help communities adapt to climate related shocks such as droughts.

Milk is a critical part of a diet for children and households in pastoral areas and contributes to a healthy household nutritional status. It is important to maintain a balance between household milk sales and consumption of milk within the households. To ensure this balance, the project will give adequate attention to nutritional awareness and behaviors that will ensure good children's nutrition in the household is not undermined.

More than three years ago, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah announced USAID Forward, an initiative to encourage and promote USAID support and investment in host country systems and non-traditional USAID fund recipients. I am proud to announce that Aged and Children

Pastoralist Association, or ACPA, is the first local NGO in the Somali Region to receive direct USAID funding through a competitive process, and I am especially pleased that they will lead the implementation of this new project.

As the first local NGO to receive USAID funding in this region, this is a great opportunity for ACPA to prove it can deliver and meet USAID requirements while delivering the project results.

So today, it is a source of great pride for me to launch this new Camel Milk Value-Chain Development Project implemented by ACPA in collaboration with Somali Regional Government. As you begin implementation, USAID is committed to work with you to ensure the project achieves positive results for the proud people of the Somali Region.

Ethiopia has a good chance of becoming a leader in promoting camel production as a key to pastoralist livelihoods security and development. With the climate uncertainty we have seen in the Somali Region, camels are the animal of the future and I look forward to seeing the successes of this project.

Thank you and ***me-HAD SEN-eed*** (thank you in Somali).